

Committees:

- Capital Budget
(co-chair)
- Transportation

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43rd District

Representative
Ed Murray

House of Representatives

Session 1999

Dear Friend,

I want to use this time to thank you once again for the opportunity of serving you in the Washington State Legislature. It's a busy time in Olympia, but I'd like to bring you up to date on the progress of this final legislative session of the 20th Century.

As you know, for just the second time in our state's history the House of Representatives is equally divided between Democrats and Republicans. This tie has presented opportunities and challenges for all of us in the Legislature. The challenge is of course the occasional strong ideological views that exist in both parties. There's also the usual differences in geography and differences between urban, rural, and suburban districts. Issues facing lawmakers are more complex than at any time in state history. Remove the politics and rhetoric, however, and you find that people everywhere are concerned about the same basic things: supportive, secure families; a good education for the kids; a healthy environment; and vibrant economy. This year's legislature overall is making good choices in these areas.

While you may be aware of my efforts on civil rights, you may not have heard about some of the legislation I've been sponsoring this session. On the other side of this letter, you'll find details on some of the more notable issues. As your representative, I recognize the trust you have placed in me, and I strive every day to deserve that trust. Please feel free to call me or my assistant, Kristin Pula at (360) 786-7217, if we can help you in any way.

Sincerely,

Representative

Ed Murray

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Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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District Issues

Along with other legislators, this session I've focused my attention on a number of key issues including teacher salaries. Among them: **transportation**. A two-year transportation budget at \$3.9 billion will launch one of the biggest highway construction booms in state history. A portion of those funds has been earmarked for noise mitigation projects in the Eastlake and Roanoke areas.

In the area of **health care**, my "patients bill of rights" has been praised in many corners, notably by consumer advocates. The measure would allow patients to appeal when insurance companies refuse to pay for certain medical procedures or needs. It also would create an independent panel to review such denials.

• Housing

As co-chair of the Capital Budget Committee, one of my top priorities this year has been **housing**. We've made real progress this session in addressing the issue of affordable housing, which truly has become a crisis throughout the state. Here's what was approved in the House:

We've significantly increased the Housing Trust Fund, a source of funds for low-income housing; in the area of **farmworker housing**, the state has finally offered leadership that begins to address the deplorable conditions in which our farmworkers live by building adequate housing; mitigation related to expansion of the convention center will result

in **affordable housing** projects throughout King County; and we've provided housing for the Homeless Children Program. It's also important to note that we've enhanced a program of fire safety for boarding homes around the state.

Meantime, legislation did not pass that would have granted local control over landlord-tenant issues.



Ed meets with Barbara Bailey, local business owner, and Eugene Wasserman with the Neighborhood Business Council.

• Building and Repairing Schools

Education is legislature's top priority, yet state support for **school construction** has been woefully inadequate. That's going to change. The House will provide local school districts with additional resources to build and maintain badly needed classroom space.

• Community Colleges and Branch Campuses

Many adults are returning to college for re-training or a second degree. The need has outstripped current facilities. The House has approved building of new classrooms, and the repair and

update of existing buildings at each of the state's **community colleges**. Dilapidated portable classrooms at also will be replaced. Additionally, funds would be provided to university branch campuses for increased student access.

• Healthy Environment Habitat and Outdoor Recreation

As Seattle and the state continue to grow, the need increases for a greater connection to the outdoors. I'd like to congratulate the many people who worked hard this year on behalf of the **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program**, which since 1990 has acquired for public use and protection thousands of acres of recreation lands and wildlife habitat. Support will continue for this popular program, which has provided new parks, greenways, walking and biking trails and more.

• Restoring Salmon

Sixteen salmon species are now listed by the federal government as protected under the Endangered Species Act. Efforts to restore the **salmon** population will affect all of us.

The legislature took several steps towards the goal of saving salmon. Among them were the approval of funds to pay for various habitat-restoration projects, and for innovative ways of reducing the catch.

I'm optimistic these efforts will succeed -- if only because our heritage demands it.